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ABSTRACT

This study undertook a systematic analysis of the position of special education director in Minnesota. Position analysis allows for a detailed cross-section analysis of a position in terms of authority and responsibility within an organization. The current study was conducted to determine the special education director's current operations tasks, his necessary behaviors, skill, knowledge, and attitudes. The task analysis revealed the main areas of the position fell under the following headings: procedures and policy making; program planning, research, and evaluation; organization and pupil services; personnel administration; school operations; office work; relations with the community; and budgeting/accounting. The analysis indicates that the position should include a master's degree in educational administration and/or special education, experience in public school administration, and training in program design and certification as required by the Minnesota State Department of Education. Also suggested is a basic understanding of the special education system; child development; laws, regulations, and guidelines pertaining to special education; local school organization; and community resources. (Author/IRT)

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A STUDY OF

SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTORS IN MINNESOTA

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Overview

Special education administration has been profoundly influenced in recent years by court decisions on the emerging rights of students. These include the right to an education, the right to due process, and to a lesser degree the right to treatment. This thrust has given special education the legal backing to assist in the movement from a quasi (separate but equal) educational system within the general system to a legitimate participant in the larger school system. The series of court decisions which outlined the concept of least restrictive alternatives have essentially ended the old era of special education administration and management, which used a simple model based on the premise that handicapped children's educational programs should be operated as a satellite to mainstream education. Under the old system, special education teachers, other support personnel and materials, space, and equipment were seen as separate budget items and functioned as a separate subsystem for day-to-day operations. This delegation for special education administration generally resulted in unilateral decisions being made by the special education management staff for all essential decisions affecting handicapped students. Only when the satellite system brushed the main education system were there any problems in decision-making. At that juncture, the decisions of general administrators usually took precedence over those of special education administrators in issues related to a "handicapped" student's re-entry into the main system.

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Under these conditions, the administrative and management competencies needed by special education administrators were consistent with the satellite system model. Competencies given higher priority were detailed knowledge of handicapping conditions as they were then defined, and information as to educational options within the satellite. Knowledge of state and local policies, regulations for placement of eligible students, and curriculum development within the parameters of the satellite were also seen as important areas of competencies (Mackie and Robbins, 1961).

The educational and experiential background of the typical administrator of special education programs was first as special class teacher who had received graduate training in a disability area and was then promoted to an administrative position. The individual selected usually had little or no prior administrative training or experience (Spriggs, 1972). For the most part, university and college special education administrative training programs were a part of special education departments which had limited contact with departments of educational administration. The special education training programs emphasized skills and information that were functional within the satellite model, while training for general educational administration was the exception.

The recent judicial decisions effecting education which preempted fundamental decisions that were once the province of the educator have resulted in "the right to education mandate," "mainstreaming," and "least restrictive alternative." These mandates have forced the reentry of special education into the main educational system. The old satellite system procedures in special education administration are no longer acceptable. Thus, special education administrators are being thrust into new responsibilities

requiring new sets of competencies. Studies concerning the duties of the director of special education were done in the past, but none of them (to our best knowledge) dealt with the matter described below.

This study undertook a systematic analysis of the position of special education director in Minnesota. It was completed as one of the preliminary steps of the Special Education Administration Training Project.* The position analysis[1] which follows, in combination with a goal analysis and an anthropological study (which are presently in progress) serves as the basis for the identification of those minimum essential competencies needed for local Minnesota special education directors.

The determination of such competencies can be approached using a number of techniques such as goal analysis or anthropological studies. However, one of the most helpful strategies is that of formal position analysis. Position analysis allows for a detailed cross section analysis of the position in terms of authority and responsibility within an organization. Competencies can then be developed to match these requirements.

For educational purposes, position analysis involves a careful study of a job within an organization. The objective is to define specific educational content for prospective and present position holders. It is a systematic collection of data describing a specific position. The present study was conducted to determine the current operational tasks of the special education director, the necessary behaviors, skills, knowledge and attitudes, and the performance of these tasks.

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[1] Richard Weatherman, Danial Dobbert, and Itzhak Harpaz, Final report and position analysis: special education director in Minnesota, University of Minnesota.

Job Analysis

The expression *job analysis* is sometimes used synonymously with a variety of job descriptive terms. This practice tends to create some confusion in meaning, especially as the term may be applied to specific job areas such as that of the director of special education. Since this analysis involves a specific position study, the term *position analysis* is used interchangeably with job analysis. Conceptually, however, one may think of job analysis as a process consisting of the determination of job skills and the translation of these facts into descriptive profiles of the specific job for which the analysis is intended. Finally, the process involves analysis of performance within the specific job setting.

In this study the definition of job analysis, used here interchangeably with position analysis, offered by the United State Bureau of Employment Security (1965) was utilized.

> ...the process of identifying, by observation, interview and study, and of reporting the significant worker activities and requirements and the technical and environmental facts of a specific job. It is the identification of the tasks which comprise the job and of the skills, knowledges, abilities, and responsibilities that are required of the worker for successful performance and that differentiate the job from all others.

This definition distinguishes job analysis from worker analysis. In worker analysis one tries to observe the particular individuals who perform a job function to discover which characteristics they bring to bear on the job process. In the present study, local directors of special education in Minnesota were actually observed. In the more inclusive frame, job analysis, the objective was to gather information *about the job* rather than merely to observe the functionaries. To this end, information was obtained about the functions as well as the skills, qualifications, and personality dispositions of the functionaries--directors. The analysis showed that a combination of these two kinds of exercises in a single study

could provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon which has been defined here as "job process."

Objectives of Job Analysis

Conceivably, innumerable situations can be thought of in which information gained through a job analysis process will be valuable. However, greatest benefit lies with full realization of the specific job areas or functions in which information is most relevant. Generally a comprehensive list of job areas will include the following:

- Personnel Research and Control,
- Time and Motion Study,
- Personnel Cost Analysis,
- Testing (Aptitudes),
- Selection Research,
- Safety Administration,
- Recruitment and Placement,
- Communication,
- Biomechanics,
- Transfers and Promotions,
- Better Management--Employee,
- Work Methods and Simplification,
- Relationships and Organizational Structure,
- Establishing Responsibility, Duties, Authority,
- Operating and Procedures Manual,
- Vocational Counseling and Guidance,
- Adjustment of Grievances,
- Job Evaluation,
- Merit Rating, and
- Training and Education.

The utility of this study is a first step towards the development of a training program for the director of special education. The position analysis for such purpose requires us to break the director's job into its components, see all the essential characteristics and requirements from such a job, and study them in order to prepare people (via our training program) to perform successfully on this job.

Analysis process

Job analysis on the managerial level. The position analysis process involves a systematic collection of information about a position, e.g., the

director of special education. Since the ultimate purpose is to spell out in as much detail as possible the tasks involved--what they are, how they are performed as well as its other attributes such as skills, knowledge and attitude--the analyst ought to be aware of certain precautions. Job analysis on the lower rungs of the organizational hierarchy--production and lower level jobs--can be a fairly straight exercise. But as one moves higher, it becomes increasingly difficult to itemize and accurately describe tasks, duties and responsibilities. For example, a managerial staff may spend a sizable proportion of hours in less concrete tasks such as interacting with staff and engaging in other routine tasks. Such activities make managerial job measurement complex. The ambiguity of the managerial function is further complicated by the fact that the incumbent may not consciously formulate the function in order to define adequately all of the attributes or dimensions of his job.

In addition to developing reasonable measures, the investigator may avail himself of certain standardized descriptions of a typical managerial function. For instance, the typical manager is said to be a solver of unprogrammed problems which are constantly changing in nature and complexity. Also, the elasticity of his job functions (which may include planning, investigating, coordinating, evaluating, supervising, negotiating, and representing his organization) places the typical manager in a unique authority position within the organization setting (Mahoney, Jerdee and Carrol, 1965). Typically, the manager will operate from a power position in a pyramidal structure, and the degree of authority he exercises will depend on the structure of his organization. It should be realized, however, that his "authority description" is at best an *ideal* construct. In reality, the typical manager may not share all of the attributes outlined.

For instance, he is dependent in a peculiar manner on his superiors, his peers and his subordinates (Leavitt, 1958). Applying standard measure to all managerial job analysis without being sensitive to the singular features of each job case may lead to spurious conclusions. The investigator ought to be aware of such peculiarities.

Analyzing the position. A second major consideration in the analysis process is determining the appropriate data gathering procedure. Several methods are available such as: questionnaire method, direct observation, individual interview, group interview, diary method, checklist method and the critical incident method. The investigator has to decide which of these is adequate for his purposes.

No one of the methods is in itself superior to others. One situation may require a direct-mail questionnaire; another may require the personal interview method; yet another may require a combination of two or more methods. Sometimes, employees are asked routinely to keep a detailed log of their duties for several months. As the occasion for job analysis arises, they are then contacted by personal interview of direct mail. Information from such ventures is then pooled for purposes of analysis.

Procedure

The initial task of the analysis was to describe the range represented by the job position. This began with a search for background materials, planned sessions with directors of special education (the eventual subjects of this study) and occasional tours of school districts. Two main sources provided the necessary background information: first, a review of the various publications in the area--books, periodicals, catalogs, pamphlets, ERIC (Educational Research and Information Center) materials and other technical journals relevant to the study; and second,

publications on the job description which have been produced by state departments, school district officials and university professionals.

Preliminary contacts with all the directors of special education in the state of Minnesota were made to explain the purpose of this study and to solicit their cooperation.

Method

The complexity of the position being analyzed requires a minimum of three data gathering procedures: the questionnaire method, combination of observation and interview, and individual interview method. The combination of these methods is particularly useful in analyzing administrative positions (Patton, Littlefield, and Self, 1964). The rationale for this approach stems from the following considerations.

- The questionnaire method requires the job holder to complete a questionnaire which covers all the aspects of his job and the environment in which it is performed. This method allows the director to see the position in its entirety as the analysis evolves. Also it induces more logical and systematic thinking about the position and its relationships on the part of the participant director. For the researchers, the analysis of the questionnaire could serve as first look into the position and the further plan and development of the other data gathering tools.
- The simultaneous combination of observation and interview permits one to observe as well as interview the director while he performs his regular duties. This method offers the opportunity for analysis of firsthand observation of the process; additionally, it provides a more comprehensive perspective for evaluating the data.

- The final method is the individual interview. This is a structured interview designed to reveal the job duties and the ways the directors go about them. This method provides the interviewer with the opportunity to review observation materials with the director. the director could also explain questions about those aspects of the job that may not be fully understood (at least from a theoretical point of view) by the interviewer.

The Analysis Instruments

The observation and interview instruments were developed and/or adapted and modified from standard text (Yoder, et al., 1958 and Mahoney, et al., 1957). A bulk of the items had to be constructed to fit the specific purpose of the analysis. The instruments were reviewed and approved by a panel of professors in the departments of special education, educational administration and industrial relations at the University of Minnesota, prior to their administration.

The Sample

At the time of this study there were 71 directors of special education in Minnesota. Since this population was so diverse in geographical location it was subdivided into four categories; metropolitan, suburban, rural-urban and cooperatives. Stratification along these dimensions was prompted by considering that the location of an incumbent might well affect his perception and understanding of his job position. Thirty percent of the directors in each category were randomly selected from a table of random numbers. This constituted the sample of directors for the observation-interview stage of the analysis. The resulting sample distribution for this study is shown on the following table:

CATEGORY	# OF DIRECTORS IN CATEGORY	# OF DIRECTORS IN SAMPLE
Metropolitan	6	2
Suburban	20	6
Rural-Urban	18	5
Cooperative	27	8
Total	71	21

Questionnaires were distributed to about 50 participants in a workshop held for the directors of special education in Minnesota, and 33 of these were completed and returned. The purpose of the questionnaires was to serve as a first step towards the development of the observation and interview tools. Observation interviews were conducted for a full working day with the stratified random sample, and an interview followed. The position description resulting from the analysis was sent to all 71 directors of special education in the state for review and comments. The purpose was to insure as much accuracy of the description as possible and to promote acceptance of the position analysis by those directly affected, the directors of special education themselves. In addition, the position description was sent to Special Education Sections of the State Department of Education, the Minnesota Administrators of Special Education (MASE) advisory committee, faculty members in the departments of special education and educational administration at the University of Minnesota. Thirty-eight reviewers responded, and their observations and valuable comments were incorporated into the final position description.

The Position Description

The director of special education has the basic function of providing all special education pupils with equal educational opportunity. He typically reports to the superintendent or assistant superintendent, and he may supervise a number of other people, including specialists, guidance and counseling personnel, and other teachers. The task analysis reveals the main areas of the director of special education under the following headings:

- Procedures and Policy Making
- Program Planning, Research and Evaluation
- Organization and Pupil Services
- Personnel Administration
- School Operations
- Office Work
- Relations with Community
- Budgeting/Accounting

Each of the above main descriptive headings have been listed with its corresponding responsibility of the director of special education in the outline below:

A. *Procedures and Policy Making*

1. Responsible for developing policies, procedures.
2. Develop, update and communicate goals and program objectives.
3. Identify, communicate, and inform.
4. Determine space allocation and planning of new facilities.
5. Consult with special committees for technical information and development of policies.

B. *Program Planning, Research and Evaluation*

1. Utilize all appropriate community, regional, state and federal resources.
2. Establish new objectives, write new program and/or improve old programs.

3. Keep abreast with developments in the discipline by constantly reading professional literature, meeting with other professionals, specialists and directors.
4. Analyze and evaluate data on child studies, special projects, surveys and research.

C. *Organization of Pupil Services*

1. Design, implement, evaluate and maintain a program of pupil services by coordinating community and staff resources.
2. Supplement special education resources by utilizing the services of agencies, whether in or out of the district.
3. Identify exceptional children, decide on and arrange for their placement in appropriate programs.
4. Develop programs to fit changing pupil needs through:
   a. Constant diagnoses of problems in consultation with staff members and specialists.
   b. Confer with teachers and parents on special child learning and behavior problems.
5. Meet and confer with superintendent, administrative councils and special teachers and staff, state officials and administrators, regulatory agencies, and other committees to gather and exchange information and ideas, discuss problems, recommend programs and techniques and promote support for further activities.

D. *Personnel Administration*

1. Utilize a trained staff with the competencies required to meet the needs of pupils in special education programs.
2. Direct the activities of all administrative, supervisory and consultative personnel.

a. Provide leadership and direction for efficient performance.

b. Assign task and coordinating staff efforts in a child placement and referral system.

c. Schedule periodic staff tasks according to case needs.

d. Evaluate staff performance.

3. Design training/development programs for special education staff.

4. Provide opportunities for conferences, meetings, workshops and in-service sessions to achieve greater staff performance.

5. Forecast and allocate manpower needs.

a. Recruit and interview applicants.

b. Selection and placement of personnel in the special education department.

6. Mediate staff grievances.

7. Recommend the dismissal of incompetent personnel.

E. *School Operations*

1. Meet with administrative committees to promote special education needs.

2. Coordinate special education activities with those of the general education system in program planning and priorities.

3. Meet and consult with the superintendent and school principals in order to promote programs and coordination of operations and facilities usage.

4. Recommend and provide materials and supplies necessary for special education services.

5. Manage/plan transportation schedules and routes for special education pupils (consult business office and/or state department for assistance).

F. *Office Work*

1. Communicate with staff and brief "drop-ins," administrators, staff, or parents on program situations as well as respond to their questions or requests.
2. Dictate letters and other communications to the secretary.
3. Publish newsletters and develop other public relations communication methods, especially with cooperatives in a large geographical setting.
4. Maintain records on special education pupils and keep them confidential.

G. *Relations with Community*

1. Inform the public and parent groups about the needs of special education pupils, and organize parent groups and programs to meet these needs.
2. Coordinate special education activities with community agencies, and inform them of current special education programs, procedures and changes.
3. Develop an on-going public relations network in order to solicit financial and political support for community special education programs.
4. Available for referral and consultation services requested by parents.

H. *Budgeting/Accounting*

1. Plan a budget, based on special education needs.
   a. Counsult with district financial manager, staff, and superintendent to plan budget needs and priorities.
   b. Investigate local budget limitations.

c. Study reimbursement guidelines.

d. Audit fiscal reports.

e. Consult with agencies in order to provide other fiscal resources.

2. Control allocations for special education programs to insure state or district coverage as needed.

3. Evaluate budget as to its effectiveness in providing optimal service to children.

4. Meet with local school board to solicit support for special education budget needs.

Based on the above description, we concluded that the position of director of special education should include a master's degree in educational administration and/or special education, experience in public school administration, and training in program design and certification as required by the Minnesota State Department of Education. Also suggested is a basic understanding of special education systems, child development, laws and regulations and guidelines pertaining to special education, local school organization, and community resources.

Conclusion

The position description represents the common or core knowledge, skills, tasks and the overall job of the director of special education in the state of Minnesota. However, the role and responsibilities of the director may vary from position to position because of such variables as differences in districts needs, population size, kinds of pupils served, department organization in a school system, resources available, levels of individual competencies as well as characteristics

and personality of the director involved. Omission of any of the tasks, skills or knowledge, described above, could limit the ability to function as a special education director in Minnesota.

Whether a position requires job analysis or job reanalysis will depend on when last such a position was evaluated, how thorough the initial analysis had been and how rapid changes may be occurring in the environment and in the position. At present, a year-long anthropological study is in progress. This study may remedy some of our limitations due to lack of cyclical-detailed information on the position. Hopefully, data from that study will improve our weaknesses as well as will complement the strengths in this analysis.

This analysis of the position of director or administrator of special education indicates that minimum competencies include a variety of technical areas. No longer is it possible for the director of special education to be trained in the categorical areas of special education or even across a number of handicapping conditions, but rather must have skills and knowledges that extend from personnel management, understanding of fiscal concerns, to detailed expertise in special education program development, management, and evaluation.

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